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Misinformation on disinformation

ARNOLD BEICHMAN

I recently read a review, published in a certain magazine to be identified later, of a book, *Dezinformatsia*, by two respected academics, Professor Richard H. Shultz Jr. of Tufts University's Fletcher School of Diplomacy and Roy Godson of Georgetown University. The review made the following serious charges against this book:

- The book was said to use "specious arguments to prove the obvious."
- It misrepresents reality to prove

a simplistic point.

- It is "misguided," exhibits a "total lack of understanding" about Clausewitz, shows "a superficial understanding of current history and the Soviet Union."

- It didn't "fairly report" the content of Soviet journals, it has treated the subject "irresponsibly," it suffers from "extraordinarily naive assumptions" and "erroneous history."

- And the book was said "ultimately" to serve "neither scholarship nor the national interest."

Such harsh language about the published work of academics can be

defined as a form of character assassination, since it questions their honor as teachers and researchers. For my part, to be even harsher, I would say that this review could, with little editing, have appeared in

a Soviet publication.

Now, then, would you like to guess in what left-wing, pro-Soviet, progressive journal this book review appeared? If you're very smart and sophisticated, you might try and guess, but you'd be wrong. I'll have to tell you:

This book review appeared in an official magazine of the government

of the United States, a magazine published by the Central Intelligence Agency — yes, by the CIA under the supervision of the Deputy Directorate for Intelligence that is responsible for all CIA analyses of world affairs.

The publication, a quarterly called *Studies in Intelligence*, is an "in-house" publication. It is not distributed publicly since some articles are classified; others, such as the book review I am discussing, are unclassified. The essay-review, in the magazine's winter 1984 issue, was written by Avis Boutell, a CIA analyst, who works for the Foreign Broadcast Information Service.

When I read the Shultz-Godson book some months ago to prepare my own favorable review, I found it a cool, scholarly examination of Soviet propaganda and disinformation strategies. So did a number of other distinguished Sovietologists and publicists, such as Professors Adam Ulam and Uri Ra'anani, Dr. Robert Conquest, and Professor Sidney Hook, who wrote the laudatory introduction.

The book, now in its third edition, included what I regarded as highly informative interviews with defectors who had specialized, while in the service of the KGB in the U.S.S.R. and Czechoslovakia, in "active measures." The Soviet strategy of "active measures" involves, for the most part, covert disinformation as "a non-attributed or falsely attributed communication, written or oral, containing intentionally false, incomplete, or misleading information [frequently combined with true information], which seeks to deceive, misinform, and/or mislead the target," according to the Shultz-Godson definition.

In other words, the book describes a panoply of Soviet tactics

to manipulate the media in the democracies, the use of "agents of influence," sponsorship of clandestine radio broadcasts, and use of international front organizations. These strategies and tactics are excellently described in this important book.

Not only is *Studies in Intelligence* an official government magazine, but it also is published by a U.S. secret service. It therefore must be assumed that whatever is published therein represents the official view of the CIA or, at the very least, the point of view of CIA analysts. As an analogy, a Voice of America editorial, for example, must be approved by responsible State Department officials before it can be read on the air.

If the CIA book review reflects the political culture of the CIA and the world in which its analysts live, then some of the egregious errors about Soviet intentions made by the CIA over the past 15 or more years, errors which have been publicly discussed in the press and by the two congressional committees on intelligence oversight, become understandable.

One could take apart, paragraph by paragraph, this CIA book review to demonstrate its use of the rhetoric of overkill.

Here I want merely to deal with the political approach of a CIA analyst whose views, no matter what the CIA might say, seem to harmonize with the agency's ethos, which I pray is not that of William J. Casey, CIA director. That this review got past Mr. Casey, I can understand; he has more important problems to deal with. But isn't there somebody in his organization who has the wit, understanding, and common decency to realize that the language used to discuss the Shultz-Godson book might be better suited to a review of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*?

Take this sneering, reductive sen-

tence in the review: "They [the authors] seem less concerned to understand the Soviet Union than to prove that it is irrational and the West totally benign."

Now anyone who has read this book knows that the authors do not seek to prove that the U.S.S.R. is irrational. On the contrary, what they demonstrate is that the Soviet KGB is performing with great skill its assignment to further the Politburo's foreign-policy objectives. The giveaway phrase in that sentence is "to prove... the West totally benign."

Of course, the authors nowhere try to show that the West is totally benign. Such a thesis is irrelevant to the book since it is merely attempting to discuss Soviet "active measures," not the good intentions of the West.

But let's face it: couldn't a victim of Soviet totalitarianism, rotting in one of its prison camps — or an Andrei Sakharov or Anatoly Shcharansky — say that, in comparison to the wholly rational tyranny of the U.S.S.R., the West is "totally benign?"

What the author (and in this, I am sure, the reviewer reflects the views of the CIA establishment) clearly rejects (and the targets of the review do not) is the meaning of Marxism-Leninism as a permanent constituent of Soviet foreign policy. What that doctrine means is that Mikhail Gorbachev cannot regard as legitimate any system of rule other than communism. Marxism-Leninism sees other political systems as doomed to fall because of the "contradictions of capitalism."

Since Marxism-Leninism carries the banner of history and the future, the U.S.S.R. alone has the right to judge who shall live and who shall die. That is why negotiation with the Soviet Union, except on its own terms, is doomed to fail until the Soviet Union accepts — in practice, not in joint communiques — an amendment to the eschatology of Marxism-Leninism.

The CIA reviewer demonstrates — let's call it naivete — a surprising naivete in assuming that the Soviet media, during the Nixon-Kissinger-Ford detente period, out of conviction sincerely ascribed to the West "realistic, positive qualities."

And she attacks the authors for not giving due credit to this thawing of the eternal Soviet winter. Of course, the Soviet media were willing to be kinder and less strident because it was during detente that the U.S.S.R. engaged without Western opposition in the greatest arms-building program of any country in history. The Soviets continue that program to this very day.

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But then there came a time when the kissing had to stop. The Soviet media changed the lovey-dovey, bear-hugging music. What in heaven's name did the West do that forced upon a doting Soviet Union a change of tune, from detente mellowness to cold war harshness? Was the error to accept sadly the destruction of 269 lives on KAL 007? Sadly accept the killing of Major Nicholson? Sadly accept the attempt on the pope's life? Sadly accept martial law for Poland? Sadly accept the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan?

But let us assume that the reviewer is correct in some of her criticisms. Does that call for a savage rhetorical barrage which borders on high-level billingsgate? Does it call for a cannonade of unprovable charges such as the claims that the book "hurts" the profession of intelligence, and the efforts to develop "a rational foreign policy," and that the book serves "neither scholarship nor the national interest?" If anybody has "hurt" the profession of intelligence, it would be Avis Boutell and whoever edits the CIA magazine.

What kind of behavior is that, William Casey? Is someone down there trying to get even with somebody else?

Arnold Beichman, a founding member of the Consortium for the Study of Intelligence, of which Professor Godson is coordinator, frequently writes about intelligence matters.